

Message Text

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64

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 TRSE-00 AGR-05 INSE-00 CAB-02

CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00

L-03 /031 W

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R 311656Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7011

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, BF

SUBJ: CIVAIR PRECLEARANCE FOR FREEPORT

REF: (A) STATE 162948; (B) NASSAU 1075

1. EMBASSY ECON OFFICER ATTENDED A MEETING CALLED BY PERMSEC, MINISTRY OF TOURISM CONCERNING PRECLEARANCE AT FREEPORT. US HEAD OF CUSTOMS NASSAU AND AIRLINE REPRESENTATIVES WERE ALSO PRESENT. PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS TO INFORM AIRLINE REPS OF PROGRESS ON PLANS FOR FREEPORT PRECLEARANCE FACILITY AND ASCERTAIN AIRLINE SUPPORT FOR SAME.

2. PERMSEC REPORTED THAT DISCUSSIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN MINISTRY OF TOURISM OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MINISTER MAYNARD, OFFICIALS OF THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY, GRAND BAHAMA DEVELOPMENT CO AND THE FREEPORT AIRPORT COMPANY. AFTER THESE DISCUSSIONS THE GCOB'S ARCHITECT, DON BROGDEN, WHO WORKED ON THE NASSAU PRECLEARANCE FACILITIES, VISITED FREEPORT AND COMPLETED A SURVEY OF NEEDED FACILITIES, COST, ETC. HIS ESTIMATE FOR BUILDING SEPARATE FACILITIES IS DOLS 500,000.

3. THE GRAND BAHAMA PORT AUTHORITY SUBMITTED A DETAILED PLAN TO THE MINTOURISM FOR THEIR APPROVAL WHICH INCLUDED FINANCING SUGGESTION OF INCREASING TOURIST SURCHARGE FROM 4 PERCENT TO
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6 PERCENT. MINISTRY OF TOURISM RAISED QUESTIONS CONCERNING

THE FINANCING AND HAS ASKED THE PORT AUTHORITY TO REVIEW ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF FINANCING OR OF REDUCING COST.

4. PERMSEC ASKED AIRLINES IF THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO SUPPORT A PRECLEARANCE UNIT IN FREEPORT ON THE SAME BASIS THAT THEY DO IN NASSAU. ALL OF THE AIRLINES INVOLVED (EASTERN, DELTA, MACKEY, SHAWNEE AND BAHAMASAIR) STRONGLY ENDORSE THE IDEA OF A UNIT IN FREEPORT.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: IT IS QUITE CLEAR FROM THE DISCUSSION AT THIS MEETING AND OTHER CONVERSATIONS ECON OFFICER HAS HAD WITH PORT AUTHORITY MANAGEMENT THAT ALL INVOLVED WITH DISCUSSION TO DATE BELIEVE ONLY OBSTACLE TO ESTABLISHING PRECLEARANCE UNIT IN FREEPORT IS A CONCRETE FINANCIAL PACKAGE AND THAT USG APPROVAL IS PRO FORMA. EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING OF ARTICLE 2 OF PRECLEARANCE AGREEMENT OF APRIL 1974 (QUOTE PRECLEARANCE SHALL BE CONDUCTED AT NASSAU AND, UPON MUTUAL AGREEMENT OF THE PARTIES EXPRESSED IN WRITING, MAY BE ESTABLISHED AT ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS IN THE BAHAMAS UNQUOTE) IS THAT IT DOES NOT, REPEAT NOT, IMPLY ANY PRIOR COMMITMENT ON PART OF USG TO AGREE TO ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS IN THE BAHAMAS. WE SEE PROS AND CONS FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT WHICH WE BELIEVE OUGHT TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION AND WILL OFFER THEM FOR DEPARTMENT'S REACTION AS SOON AS WE HAVE CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF USG POSITION FROM RESPONSES TO (A) THROUGH (C) BELOW.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: (A) EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPARTMENT TO CONFIRM EMBASSY'S INTERPRETATION OF AGREEMENT AS PER ABOVE, SPECIFICALLY THERE IS NO PRIOR USG COMMITMENT TO EXTENDING PRECLEARANCE TO FREEPORT. B) IF EMBASSY'S INTERPRETATION IS CORRECT WE REQUEST AUTHORITY TO APPROACH MINEXTAFF THROUGH A DIPLOMATIC NOTE STATING THAT WE UNDERSTAND THAT DETAILED DISCUSSIONS OF A TECHNICAL NATURE ARE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN GCOB OFFICIALS AND INTERESTED PARTIES AND THAT WHILE THE USG IS PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF A PRECLEARANCE FACILITY FOR FREEPORT THERE IS NO PRIOR COMMITMENT ON OUR PART TO AGREE TO SUCH PROPOSAL. C) EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT DEPARTMENT DISCUSS ISSUE WITH PRECLEARANCE AGENCIES (CUSTOMS, INS AND AGRICULTURE) AND ADVISE US OF WASHINGTON VIEW. COMMENTS MADE BY PRECLEARANCE REPRESENTATIVES HERE GIVE IMPRESSION THAT HOME AGENCY APPROVAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HAD ALREADY BEEN GIVEN OR COULD BE ASSUMED, WITH ONLY CAVEAT AVAILABILITY OF PERSONNEL.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL AVIATION, AIRPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975NASSAU01232
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750264-1092
From: NASSAU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975074/aaaaadhm.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 162948, 75 NASSAU 1075
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <08 DEC 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CIVAIR PRECLEARANCE FOR FREEPORT
TAGS: EAIR, BF, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006